

SSB'S The Story of
Rama
(Ramayana)



Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj

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PREFACE

Ramayana and Mahabharatha are the two greatest Epics of our country. They have been perennial sources for our creative minds. Of these two epics Ramayana has been written earlier than Mahabharatha and that depicts eternal values of truth, honesty, affection, obedience, righteousness and many other values. The hero of the epic poem Rama personifies these values. He is a virtuous human being but through character and conduct rises to the height of God and earns reverence from the entire world.

There are many versions of Ramayana each written according to the interpretation and vision of individual author. To add to the number, I have ventured to write one more. The main objective of writing or re-narrating the story of Rama is to enable the young and school going children to read and get influenced by Rama's ideal character. Keeping this objective in mind, I have retold the story in a very simple language, and given importance to only story line, avoiding the philosophic discourses, didactic words and descriptive details.

In view of turning our young minds towards our culture, I have made an attempt through writing this book.

At the request of our publisher Mr. N. Karthikeyan, I have written this book. This is my first attempt in writing for children. Hope this book, ignoring the flaws, will be received well by our young readers. If this is done I feel gratified. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our publisher for encouraging to write this book.

Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj

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The Story of

Rama

(Ramayana)



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THE STORY OF RAMA

Who has not heard the story of Ramayana? every one in India and abroad has heard and read Ramayana, the story of Rama. This is one among two great epics of our country and part and parcel of our culture.

Rama is known for his valour and virtues; obedience to his father; love for his brothers, respect for parents and elders; teachers and sages. It is but natural that we have to remember such a great idealist and divine natured man.

The great epic Ramayana was written by Visionary poet, saint Valmiki.

One day the saint Narada visited Valmiki's Ashram. After the usual enquiries Valmiki out of curiosity asked Narada to tell him, who is the most virtuous man on this earth. Narada mentions about Rama from sun's dynasty. He also narrates the whole story and asks him to

write about such a man. On hearing all the qualities of Rama he was so impressed that he decided to write about him. The story of Rama lingered in his mind. But only thing he felt difficult was the form and rhythm of the words.

One day as he was walking along the river side, he noticed two Krauncha birds sporting happily on a tree. Before he could take off his eyes from the sight, suddenly an arrow came rushing and killed the male bird. On seeing the death of her partner, the female Krauncha lamented bitterly in a piteous fashion.

Valmiki seeing the tragedy burst into tears and enraged with the act of killing, he turned and saw the hunter. Immediately, he pronounced a curse on him with deep felt pain, that the one who killed shall suffer for long years.

But later he regretted for his deed and felt sense of guilt. However after repeatedly thinking of the curse and the words he used, he marvelled at the rhyme and rhythm of words. He discovered that his utterances were nothing but sloka form. Immediately he started writing this epic.

Birth of Rama and his brothers

To the north of Ganga was the great Kosala kingdom, situated on the banks of river surayu. Ayodhya was the capital. This was ruled by great and virtuous king Dasaratha, descendent of solar dynasty. People of this city were kind, generous, happy and loved their king very much for his good qualities and chivalry.

He had eight ministers to give advice on administration and Vasishta and Vamadeva, the sages to teach and guide about dharma. Dasaratha's name and fame had spread in all directions. He was very happy with his three queens, Kausalya, Sumithra and Kaikeyi. He had good counsellors, best guidance from great sages, best wishes from his subjects who were like his own children.

Many years rolled on. Though he lacked nothing, he had one regret, that he had no children (sons) to take over his kingdom when he becomes old. He was worried too much about his childlessness. He discussed about this matter with his Kulaguru, who advised him to perform Putrakamesti yaaga, appeasing

gods and to ask for sons. So one day Dasaratha invited Rishyashringa to be the priest and conduct yaaga.

As was expected, the gods were pleased. All gods went to Vishnu and prayed him to go to earth and be born as the son of Dasaratha and fulfil his yearning to have a son. Vishnu willingly agreed to this task. While Dasaratha was pouring ghee into flames, a divine figure appeared and said, "O! Dasaratha gods are pleased. They have granted you the boon. Take this bowl of Payasam and feed your queens" and disappeared. King Dasaratha with great joy did as he was advised. The payasam was distributed among his queens. Half the payasam was given to Kausalya and other half was given to Sumithra and Kaikeyi. Kaikeyi was angry for having received last. What little more was left was given again to sumithra.

After some time, he received the news that his queens have conceived. He felt very happy and thanked the gods for the boon and blessings. The queens completed nine months in great anxiety and imagination. The people

of the kingdom, the great sages and all the members of Dasaratha's family, the ministers all eagerly were waiting for the birth of children, particularly the birth of Vishnu, as the son of Dasaratha.

The moments of expectation came closer and sons were born. Lord Vishnu as the son of Kausalya was born. Sumithra gave birth to two sons, Kaikeyi gave birth to one son. Gods and sages were very happy to see Lord Vishnu on earth. The people of Ayodhya were overjoyed and they all blessed the children in unison.

One auspicious day Dasaratha performed naming ceremony. He with the consultation of Sage Vasishta named his sons as Rama, Lakshmana, Shathrugna and Bharatha. All the four brothers played and enjoyed together. As they grew old they loved each other so deeply, that they would not separate from each other, even for a moment. But, however Rama, Lakshmana paired together more than the others. Shathrugna and Bharatha, likewise were always together. Each one was a gem! and they were known for their special qualities.

Learning of Princes

The king and queens were very happy with their children's good qualities, love and affection between brothers. As they were growing Dasaratha himself took up the responsibility of teaching archery to his sons. He became the first guru, before sending them to Gurukula. Dasaratha was an exponent of Archery. He was so well known for Shabdavedi a particular skill in archery, with which one can shoot or aim at an object only through noise or voice, that no body could challenge him in this particular skill. But unfortunately, this special skill itself brought on him a tragic curse.

One day while he was on his hunting expedition, he heard a gurgling sound of a pitcher. But Dasaratha mistook it as the sound of an elephant drinking water and shot an arrow. Immediately just in a moment he heard some one screaming with pain. He got scared, and followed in the same direction from which the scream was heard. Later he realised that he had killed Sravana Kumara, only son of

blind saint couple. The couple pronounced curse on Dasaratha, that he should die, while his sons are far away from him.

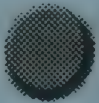
He taught all the skills of archery and felt very happy with their progress. Later, he sent them to Gurukula to learn all other branches of knowledge. There in Gurukula, the brothers learnt religious texts, vedas, social etiquettes, rights and duties, moral values and many other things. Vasista, the Guru or the teacher was very happy with their character, behaviour and their quick learning capabilities.

When they finished their learning, a message was sent to Dasaratha to make arrangements for his sons to return to the palace. Vasishta had taught the princes with selflessness. He had taught them about administration and duties of a ruler. He told them that a ruler who keeps his subjects happy and in peace, will win the love and reverence from his subjects. He should always think good and prosperity of his subjects.

On receiving the message from Gurukula, Dasaratha requested Sumanthra, his chief of

ministers to go and fetch the princes. Sumanthra as was requested, left to the hermitage or the Gurukula. On reaching the place, he conveyed respects of Dasaratha to Vasishta who in turn enquired about Dasaratha, the queens and all his subjects.

The princes were summoned and informed about their return. The princes, before leaving, they expressed their respects. But they were feeling sad to leave their teacher and their Gurukula friends. They could do nothing but leave to their home. They prepared for their departure, got into their princely dress. They once again took leave from every body, boarded the chariot and started the journey towards Ayodhya.



Arrival of Princes and Vishwamitra to Ayodhya

On hearing the arrival of princes the queens and people of Ayodhya were happy. They made all preparations to receive the princes. They decorated the entire city with colourful Rangoli, flowers, festoons and lights. They danced in joy.

The princes were overjoyed to see the people showing and showering their love in such a wonderful manner. They got down the chariot, walked the streets and received the greetings of the people and finally entered the palace where all family members and ministers were eagerly waiting. They bowed to every body and got their blessings. The mothers were very excited to see their children after a long time of separation.

Dasaratha was very proud of his sons for their noble nature and their beauty. Now he had no reason to fear and worry about his kingdom as he was sure of his sons' ability to rule the kingdom. He was convinced that Rama

the eldest son would definitely take care of the people and keep them happy and prosperous.

Everything was well going. One day while Dasaratha was discussing something with his Guru Vasishta, a messenger came in, saluted and informed him that the sage Vishwamithra want to meet the king Dasaratha. Dasaratha who had known the sage Vishwamithra well, had great respects for him, on hearing the mention of Vishamithra he himself rushed to bring the sage with respects.

Vishwamithra was greeted with all respects and he was brought into palace. Dasaratha with all politeness, enquired about his welfare and asked him, "Sir, I am really honoured with your coming to my place and blessing me. I am grateful to you for that. But tell me sir is there any thing that I can do for you?"

Vishwamithra was pleased with Dasaratha. He replied, "O King! I have come here to ask for a favour from you."

Dasaratha with humility replied, "Sir, you need not ask as favour, you can order me, what I have to do for you."

Vishamithra was very much pleased. He expressed his intention of taking Rama and Lakshmana to guard them from demons Thataka, Mareecha and Subahu who have been disturbing their yagna throwing blood, bones and flesh into yagna fire. On hearing this, Dasaratha became silent. He was afraid to send his sons to fight the demons, as they were very young. He was thinking as what to say to Vishwamithra. But Vasishta, who could know the mind of Dasaratha, spoke to him and convinced him that he had to have no fear as Rama is none but Vishnu himself and he can well manage and destroy the demons.



Rama Accompanies Viswamithra

Dasaratha had no choice. He was forced to honour the request. So finally with sad mind, he allowed his sons Rama and Lakshmana to go along with the sage, and blessed them to return with success and safety. Viswamithra took the two brothers into the thick forest called Dandaka which was so fearful that no body would dare to enter. But it was a peaceful dwelling place for hermits, who dislike any noise.

Vishwamithra told them all about Thataka, Mareecha, Subahu and other demons, and explained how they were obstructing their yagnas. He also said about their roaming places of the demons. Thataka was the most fearful. She had the strength of thousand elephants and she was very cruel.

Rama heard everything. He was thinking, how to fight them, meanwhile, he located Thataka, and Thataka hearing the sound of twang came and noticed Rama getting ready to shoot. Immediately she pounced on him. But Rama tactfully escaped and aimed rightly



and killed her in a second. Gods and sages were happy, they showered praises on him. Rama guarded the sages from demons and protected their yagna performance.

After destroying demons, Vishwamithra continued his journey along with Rama, Lakshmana towards Mithila Kingdom to show them the marvellous bow in the court of King Janaka.

While they were heading towards Mithila or Videha, they came across a deserted hermitage, which belonged to Sage Gautama, the husband of Ahalya. When Rama enquired, why this hermitage was in such condition? Vishwamithra narrated the story of Ahalya. One

day when Gautama was away, Indra who was attracted by the divine beauty of Ahalya, came in the guise of Gautama and expressed his desire for her love. Ahalya, knowingly or unknowingly submits herself. After fulfilling his desire, he hurries out for fear of getting caught. But unfortunately at the same moment, the real Gautama enters and understands what all has happened. Becoming furious, pronounced curse on both Indra and Ahalya and told Ahalya, that she will have no form but a stone until Rama sets his feet in this place and touches her.



Now Rama walks forward and touches the stone. Immediately the stone turns into woman form and bows to Rama's feet in penitence.

Sita Swayamvara

Now the sage Vishwamithra, Rama and Lakshmana traversed through the forest and reached Mithila. King Janaka, who was also like a sage welcomed all the three. He was surprised to see two young and handsome princes with the sage. He asked the sage about them. He said, he had not seen such lovely princes earlier.

Vishwamithra was feeling very happy, told Janaka about these princes, that they were the sons of worthy king Dasaratha of Ayodhya and they have come here to watch the swayamvara of his daughter Sita. Janaka was very much pleased. He invited them to be present on the day of Swayamvara.

On the day of Swayamvara kings and princes from all over the world had come to test their luck in winning Sita, the most beautiful lady in the whole of the Universe. All princes and kings were given a test. A huge bow gifted to Janaka by Lord Shiva and any one who can lift and fix the arrow, will win Sita. This was the test that all had to pass through.

Every body, the greatest of great warriors like Ravana of Lanka, tried to lift the bow. Unfortunately, every body failed to lift. Janaka was worried. He was afraid that Sita might have to stay unmarried, if no one succeeds in the test. Vishwamithra, noticed the sad face of Janaka. But he kept quiet. Janaka openly regretted the Swayamvara challenge and said if had he known that there cannot be a great warrior in this world to lift this bow, he would not have announced this challenge.



Lakshmana, hearing this got angry, for he felt insulted with the words spoken by Janaka. He himself would have done the job of lifting

and breaking the bow. But he wanted his elder brother Rama to accept the challenge so he went to his brother and requested him to answer the challenge. Rama looked at Vishwamithra, Vishwamithra knowing his intention, granted him the permission. On receiving permission Rama proceeded and approached the bow, Surveyed it, lifted the bow at ease and stretched the string with no effort. Because of the force the bow broke into two pieces. The assembly of kings and princes were overjoyed. Sita who was watching the happenings, now gleamed with joy; moved slowly towards Rama with a garland and adorned him with that. But unfortunately, those happy moments came to halt, as Parashurama entered the place. He was very angry. He shouted, "Who dared to break the bow of Shiva? Oh king Janaka, what a fool you are to have permitted for such a thing. I am going to destroy your kingdom."

Janaka could say nothing, Lakshmana wanted to explain Parashurama. But Rama calmed him down. He himself approached Parashurama and confessed politely that he

was the one responsible for breaking the bow. However Parashurama after a while soothened himself and invited Rama for another challenge. Rama was to string a bow now, that was given to Parashurama by Vishnu and was no less powerful than the one that was broken by Rama.

Rama, politely accepted his challenge also. Received the bow from Parashurama, pulled the string, took the arrow and fixed it. Now he was to shoot. Before that he addressed Parashurama, "O! son of Jamadagni, I know the reason for your anger. Your father was killed by a Kshathriya and you have been avenging the death of your father. But you cannot frighten me as you did with others. Now my arrow is fixed, do you want me to shoot and show my valour? It cannot be taken back, shall I destroy your power of locomotion? Or would you allow the arrow to consume the fruits of your long tapas?

Parashurama realised the greatness of Rama. Approached him, humbly requested him (Rama) to excuse his arrogance.

By then Dasaratha and his family, ministers

and all other important persons had arrived to participate in the marriage celebrations. Dasaratha, who was very much disturbed with this incident, now felt relieved. Everything ended happily.



Rama married Sita and Janaka's other three daughters Urmila, Mandavi, Shruthakirti married Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrugna.

The citizens of Ayodhya were very happy. They received all the four couples with pomp and pleasure.

Rama and Sita lived happily for 12 years in Ayodhya. They were loving couple. There was good understanding between them. They were going to be future king and queen of Ayodhya.

Crowning of Rama

Dasaratha was very proud of his sons. They were virtuous, chivalrous. He made no discrimination between his sons and queens. Rama was however more graceful, handsome, soft spoken, courageous, compassionate, serene, wise. All these qualities earned him great admiration. Everybody felt that he would make a perfect king.

As everybody was expecting, Dasaratha, considering his old age thought it as the right time to anoint Rama as Yuvaraja. The successor of Dasaratha. He called for a meeting. Kulaguru Vasishta and the ministers, along with Dasaratha, held discussions. Vasishta, headed the committee. Dasaratha stood up in reverence and spoke in a deep and humble voice, "Sirs, I, like my ancestors ruled the kingdom with concern and commitment. I loved my subjects and cared them as my own children. But further I cannot continue as a king because of my old age.

I want to transfer the responsibility of ruling the kingdom. Following the holy custom of my

forefathers, I would like to retire to forest. With all your wise consultation and consensus, I would like to anoint Rama as Raja and free myself from the responsibility."

The whole assembly rejoiced on hearing Dasaratha's intention. Every one spoke high of Rama's virtues. So they all in one voice said, "Oh king, let there not be any delay."

So immediately king Dasaratha requested Vasishta, Vamadeva and other learned men and guardians of sacred rites to make necessary preparations for crowning of Rama, as this was the right month (Chaitra).

The assembly felt happy to have been trusted with the duties of anointing Rama as Raja. Rama was called and informed about his anointment. He was surprised. He did not know anything about the happenings. He never wished to be a king. But as he was duty bound, he could not disobey the orders of the elders.

The news spread all over the world. Every one felt happy and enthused. Dasaratha called Rama to his chamber and spoke to him in

affection. He told him the reason for his decision. "Dear son, I have this wish to coronate you as early as possible. I am becoming old. In addition, I feel something bad is going to happen. Bharatha is not here presently I know. But still, I want this to happen as early as possible as we do not know how the people and their minds change.

Rama could not say anything. He heard everything in silence, he took leave of his father and went to the mother Kausalya, told her about what he had heard from his father.

Kausalya on hearing this felt exalted. She blessed Rama with long life, asked him to be a good ruler and earn name and fame.

Coronation ceremony was fixed for next day. The entire Ayodhya had put up a festive look. People were chatting gleefully. There was lot of cheerful commotion.

Rama and Sita were initiated into ritual performances. They observed strict austerity.

In the palace, within the harem all the three queens were very happy to see their dear son Rama as the king. But amidst such

jubilant atmosphere, there was one soul, who was very much upset and sad. She was Manthara, the hunchbacked woman who served Kaikeyi and she was also Kaikeyi's companion and a well wisher. As soon as she came to know about Rama's coronation, she rushed to Kaikeyi's chamber and exclaimed loudly, "O fool! Kaikeyi, what have you been doing, when your rights are at stake. Rama is going to be crowned, Kausalya will be the Rajamatha (king mother). You and your son will be deprived of your status and kingdom."

Kaikeyi was not perturbed. She was cool. She said, "O Manthara, what a good news you are giving. I knew that earlier. I am so happy that my dear darling would be the king. I should really be awarding you for this wonderful news." So saying she gifted Manthara a necklace. But Manthara instead of feeling happy. Furiously roared and threw the necklace on the floor and admonished her saying, "If you don't wake up your senses, you shall have to live like maid servant of Kausalya, and she will get all the honour. Your son will be servant of Rama.

Kaikeyi was not convinced of her logic. She found nothing wrong in the decision. She told Manthara, "Manthara what ever is done is done rightly. According to dynasty and tradition, the eldest of the sons is the rightful heir to the throne. In such a situation, how can I change the tradition?" So saying she became thoughtful. Manthara understood her dilemma. She told her, "Kaikeyi, have you forgotten about the boons that the king had promised you, when you had helped him in the war. Make use of the boons. This is the right time. If you miss this opportunity, you will repent, for ever. Of the two boons for one you ask exilement of Rama to forest for fourteen years and for another, ask for coronation of Bharatha. Be determined. Dont let yourself to go fickle."

After Manthara's evil advice, Kaikeyi's mind changed. Fear entered her mind. Entire past reeled before her eyes. Dasaratha loved her the most. She was the youngest of the queens. She was married because both his elder wives bore no children. In view of progeny, he had

married Kaikeyi. But unfortunately, even Kaikeyi remained childless.

Manthara was successful in influencing Kaikeyi. Now Kaikeyi prepared herself to express her agony and anger. She knew that Dasaratha would definitely come to her chamber.

As expected Dasaratha, anxiously entered Kaikeyi's chamber. But to his surprise, she was not there, she had retired to her kopagriha. Dasaratha, guessing her to be there entered the chamber. He was shocked to see Kaikeyi lying down on the floor, stripping off all her jewels, leaving her hair unplaited. The king got frightened. But still, picking up little courage, politely speaking, approached her, she did not respond. But he saw her sobbing. King was very much moved to see her in such distressful condition. He asked her the reason for her silence, anger and agony. But she did not answer. "Tell me what makes you so. If you want anything from my side. I will definitely do it. I promise you" he said in a mellowed voice.

Hearing the word promise Kaikeyi got up. Went to him, leaning on his bosom, she said, "O king, do you remember your promise of giving two boons to me? You had told me that whenever I want to fulfil those boons, I can ask you... Now the time has come, I want you to fulfil my boons, towards one, you shall send Rama to forest for 14 years and for the other Bharatha shall be the king of Ayodhya."



Dasaratha could not believe his ears. What kind of boons are these! Every preparation is made for Rama's anointment. More than that, Rama is my life, my breath, my future. I cannot live without him. He tried to convince her. He

told her that he would give anything on earth, but she should not demand the exile of Rama. But Kaikeyi was reluctant. She refused for alternate. She told Dasaratha, "O king! I have nothing personally against Rama. He is ideal, honest, learned, brave and he has many more qualities than any of us. But my son is more than any thing. So please grant my boons. I am sure you will not fail in your words. You will keep up the promise." Not only she said these words but she even threatened to suicide if he does not fulfil his promise.

Any amount of pleading was of no use. The moments of coronation were approaching. Sumanthra came in search of the king. When he came in kaikeyi asked him to bring Rama as Dasaratha wants to see him.

Rama obediently followed sumanthra and entered Kopagriha and saw his father very depressed. So he asked, 'Mother what has happened to father? Why he is so worried?'

Kaikeyi, immediately said, "Rama you are the cause for it. He wants to say something, but he is hesitating."

Rama answered, "Mother if it is so, why don't you yourself tell me the matter. I shall solve it, however difficult it may be."

Then Kaikeyi said, "My son, your father had given two boons to me, and told me to fulfil whenever I wanted. Now I am asking to fulfil."

"What problem is there now to fulfil mother?" Rama eagerly asked.


"O son, for one boon, I want your exilement for fourteen years and for the other coronation of Bharatha."

Rama without a second thought answered, "Mother these are such simple things. No body need to worry. I shall definitely see my father keeps up his promises."

Kaikeyi was very happy to see the problem solved so easily. Rama took blessings from Kaikeyi and the father and went to his mother Kausalya. Kausalya knowing all, felt depressed. But did not prevent Rama from going to forest. Of course, it was painful to think of separation for fourteen long years. With heavy heart she had to agree and see him off. Lakshmana, Sita coming to know of Rama leaving to forest,

insisted that they would also accompany him. Rama tried to prevent them, but they did not stop, so all the three, giving up their royal costumes, got into simple and crude attire. They took every one's blessings and left Ayodhya. All kith and kin and people of Ayodhya were in tears. The whole city looked bereaved of some one very very dear and near to them.

Thus every thing ended in tragedy. The city which was to be joyful and joyous with celebrations of coronation, now looked sad and silent, and even deserted.



Rama in exile

Sumanthra escorted Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. The chariot reached the banks of Tamasa. It was night. They could not travel further. So that night they all rested under the trees. Before dawn only they wanted to leave that place, because of the people of Ayodhya, if come to know about their whereabouts they would not allow them to go. Sumanthra drove the chariot further into the forest.

They reached the banks of Ganga. The place was so calm and peaceful. They thought, they would halt that night there. There was a tribal village on the banks. Guha the chieftain of the tribe came to know the arrival of Rama. He went and greeted them. He had great respect for the royal family. He treated them with all humility. They were very happy for his hospitality.

Now they were to take leave of Guha and Sumanthra. Rama turned to sumanthra and said, "Please convey our great regards to our parents. take care of them."

Sumanthra was in tears. He said, "How am

I to return? How am I to comfort with empty words? How shall I go back without you?"

Rama once again urged Sumanthra not to worry, and sent him home.

Guha, after knowing the whole story, requested him to spend all fourteen years in his kingdom. But Rama politely declined his request saying, that if he remains here he would be dishonouring his father's words. He requested Guha to ferry them to the other side of the river, which Guha did with great pleasure. But he did this with one condition, that he should allow him to wash his feet, lest his boat should be turned into woman. He believed and said, "Sir, you are capable of changing any thing into human beings. Hence if my boat is turned into a woman what shall I do for my lively hood.

Rama smiled at his logic and allowed his feet to be washed.

Guha ferried the three on to the otherside of the river. He took leave of them. All the three gifted him with something.

They took holy bath in the river Ganges and

prayed Ganga Matha. Marched towards the deep forest. While walking they took care to see if Sita was safe. Lakshmana was ahead of Sita and Rama behind. So sita would be safe being in the middle. They walked and rested under a banyan tree.

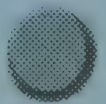
In the morning, after finishing morning ablutions. They headed towards Bharadwajashram. The sage was very happy to receive them. After mutual enquiries, enjoying the hospitality of the sage, Rama asked the sage to tell them a proper place where they could spend the years quietly in peace. The sage suggested Chitrakoota as the best place.

Taking leave of the sage they continued their journey. Followed the topographical instructions by the sage, on their way, they enjoyed the beauty of nature. Sita was excited to see the beautiful blossoms, greenery all around them, chirping of birds, buzzing of the bees, the sweet melody of Cuckoo. They felt more happy than they were at the palace. They bathed in the sacred rivers, ate fruits and the edible roots on their way.

They saw from a distance the chitrakoota hill, which the sage Bharadwaj had informed. They were glad and so they began to walk faster. They exclaimed, 'How beautiful is the place?' And they were even happy to notice number of Ashramas where in holy Rishi Munis lived. Now their destiny was at close reach.

Lakshmana was a clever craftsman. With the available forest material, he constructed a beautiful and strong and sturdy Kuteera (dwelling). He made it so well that Rama, Sita could be more comfortable.

Rama looking at the kuteera, thrilled and appreciated Lakshmana for his clever craftsmanship and wondered how did he learn this art of construction of building. In that kuteera all the three people lived happily. There was no dearth of anything. Natural foods were available in plenty. Rishi Munis were there for companionship and religious discourses.



Dasaratha's demise and Bharatha's arrival

Sumanthra on his return from forest, was in great grief. He was not in a position to answer the people. They were demanding him, where did he leave the brothers and Sita, whole city looked desolate and devoid of the usual cheerful bustle. He felt as if they city has lost its soul. He drove further and reached the palace. He immediately rushed into the Dasaratha's apartment. He saw the king lying motionless, lifeless eyes watching the roof. Sumanthra approached the king, told him the Rama's message. Tried to convince the king that Rama, Lakshmana, Sita are quiet happy as they were earlier. Kausalya at that moment was in a bad temper and grief. She was abusing the king for being cruel to her son and herself. She even accused him of falling a prey to Kaikeyi. She expressed her intention of going to forest and living with her children. Dasaratha tried to console her and pleaded his helplessness in this matter. Thinking of the difficulties of the forest life, she was filled with grief, she thought

that the king has done this intentionally to secure throne for Bharatha.

Dasaratha was helpless. Even in the intensity of anguish he turned to his wife and pleaded for forgiveness. At last Kausalya, though angry at heart, melted, seeing the pitiful condition of her husband, she broke down too.

Dasaratha narrated to her the story of Shravana Kumara, the curse which befell on him. Now curse would be fulfilled. The moment of death has approached, he thought. He was in great fatigue. He closed his eyes thinking of Rama.

Kausalya and Sumithra who were attending on him were weary too. So they also fell into sleep. Night passed, everything seemed calm and peaceful.

At dawn people came to wake up the king. But any amount of requests and morning hymns, which normally were sung, failed to rouse him. People were suspicious. Some of them dared to enter king's sleeping chamber. To their dismay, they found the king dead. News spread like fire. The queens were in great

sorrow. They repented for having spoken harsh to him. They broke down, clung to the king's body. They would not part with it. They lamented and cursed for themselves.

Guru Vasishta, Sumanthra and the Ministers thought of funeral rites. Immediately they sent message to Bharatha to return to Ayodhya as fast as possible.

Meanwhile, Bharatha at grand parents place was dreaming all evil things, hence he was afraid of some bad news. His premonition came true. He received message from Ayodhya that he should come as early as possible, he left to Ayodhya.

As soon as Bharatha and Shatrugna reached Ayodhya, they rushed to see their father. But to their surprise, he was no where seen. They became suspicious. However Bharatha went to see his mother Kaikeyi. She was very happy to see her son return to Ayodhya. He and Shatrugna paid their respects to Kaikeyi. Bharatha enquired about his father.

Kaikeyi did not tell him his father's death immediately. She spoke greatly about

Dasaratha. His honesty, truthfulness, valour, religiousness, love for the people and all that. Only after some time she revealed his death. Bharatha was shocked. He broke into sobs. Then he enquired about his brothers Rama, Lakshmana and Sister in-law, Sita. Kaikeyi told Bharatha the whole story and requested him to occupy the throne. Bharatha was furious. Both the news were shocking and unbearable. Without even little consideration, he shouted at his mother Kaikeyi as murderer of father. He even abused her with harsh words for sending his dear brother and sister in-law. He hated to see her face. He even tried to kill her. But Shatrugna tried to calm him down. Bharatha was so depressed that no amount of consolation would bring peace to his mind.

Vasishta, Vamadeva and other elders consoled him and reminded him of his duties as he was the one now to perform funeral rites of his father, he should forget all other things and get on to the duties.

Dasaratha's body amidst lot of hue and cry, sobs from queens and people, was brought

and placed on a sandalwood pyre, raised on the banks of sarayu river. Bharatha gave agni sparsha to it.

Bharatha could not control his grief. He had lost interest in earthly things. He felt detached, gave up all royal attires. He was feeling a kind of guilt and sin, because of his mother's deeds. He was pining to see his brothers and sister in-law as soon as possible. But in the palace, after completion of funeral rites preparations were thought for the crowning of Bharatha. Hence Vasishta and others sent for Bharatha. He was explained of the things, and advised him to take charge of the kingdom for they felt that the kingdom should not be left without a king for long time.

But Bharatha did not agree for that. He said frankly, "This kingdom belongs to Rama alone. We will only be serving him. I will go and request my brother Rama to return home and take the throne."

Everyone around the place praised Bharatha for brotherly affection and selflessness and sacrifice. They said, he is nothing less than

Rajarishi. Bharatha expressed his intention of going to forest and ask excuse for what all has happened in his absence. He even told the elders that he would bring back his brother Rama and then he shall be coronated.

Preparations were made to leave to forest. The army and big retinue got ready to accompany Bharatha to meet Rama.

When every thing was ready Bharatha along with his retinue including mothers and other members of the family left to the forest. After traversing the thick forest, they stood on the banks of river Ganga. Guha who was on the other side noticed some commotion from distance. He recognised immediately the person as the prince Bharatha. But he was wondering why Bharatha has come along with the army. He thought that Bharatha wants to kill Rama. So he ordered his ferrymen to assemble and wait for his command, incase they were to fight against Bharatha.

Guha went straight to Bharatha. By then Bharatha had finished all Shradhdhakarmas (rites) of his father. Sumanthra, the wise

minister, understood the matter and told Bharatha that why guha has come here with his kinsmen. He introduced Guha to Bharatha, as Rama's closest friend and he has helped Rama to great extent. He also told him that Guha is familiar with nook and corner of Dandaka forest and he is the right person to take us to the place where Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are there. Guha learning to know the real reason of Bharatha coming here, he became emotional, blamed himself for mistaking a person like Bharatha.


Bharatha, told him of his intention and requested him to show the way to Bharadwaja Ashram. Guha ordered his ferrymen who were familiar with the region to accompany Bharatha and his men. Guha also explained to Bharatha how he met Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, what difficulties they had, how they lived and all that.

Hearing all this Bharatha felt sorry for them. His agony increased, he was very anxious to see his brothers. Spent the night on the banks of Ganges, quickly got up in the morning. By

then Guha had come to say hellow to Bharatha and escort them to Rama's place. By Guha's orders, the boat men hurriedly brought together from all sides five hundred boats and ferried all men, women and things to the other side of the Ganges.

Having reached the place of Ashram along with Vasista and his counsellors on foot, they offered their respects. Vasista and Bharadwaja were so happy to have met after a long time. After mutual exchange of greetings, and enjoying the hospitality of the sage Bharadwaja, Bharatha enquired about Rama's dwelling place. Bharadwaja told him the location of Chitrakoota and guided him the route.

Bharatha taking leave of the sage set out towards Chitrakoota. They saw from distance Chitrakoota hill and proceeded eagerly towards a spot from where they could see the smoke, suggesting the existence of dwelling. He left his followers behind and hurried alone towards the dwelling.



Meeting of Brothers

Here at Chitrakoota, life went on smoothly. All the three were very happy and cheerful. The beautiful mountains, flowing rivers, singing birds, fragrant flowers, delicious fruits, all made them happier than ever. They forgot all sorrows. Rama always tried to keep sita happy. Her desires were attended immediately.

One day as they were sitting leisurely as usual, Lakshmana noticed crowd of dust. He was wondering as for what the dust is. He was curious. So he climbed on tree and looked around. He noticed Bharatha and his army men. He became furious. He thought that Bharatha was coming to attack them and so he got ready with bow and arrow in case he was to fight. Rama saw Lakshmana in bad temper and getting ready to fight some one. "Lakshmana what has happened? Why are you so angry?" Rama enquired.

"Brother, none other than Bharatha coming with an army to kill us. He is not happy inspite of securing the kingdom. We should not spare him. We must teach him a lesson." Lakshmana answered in anger.

Rama was cool, he did not get disturbed with the words of Lakshmana. He only smiled, because he did not believe what he thought about Bharatha. Rama knew Bharatha very well. He is a pious person. He can never think of causing pain to any one. Without knowing the reason, he thought it not fair to become angry. So he calmed him down, and asked to wait for the arrival of Bharatha.

Bharatha halted his army at a distance and proceeded towards Rama's dwelling along with Sumanthra and Shathrugna. When they reached the cottage and saw them Bharatha, sprang and fell at the feet of Rama saying only 'brother' and he was speechless. Tears rolled from his eyes and wet Rama's feet. Rama seeing this, was moved. He lifted Bharatha slowly and embraced him.

Rama enquired about father, mothers and kingdom. Bharatha could not answer immediately. He was choked with sorrow. After some time, he some how controlled and said, "Brother, not withstanding your separation, father breathed his last. He is dwelling in heavenly abode. Till the last minute of his

earthly departure he was taking only your name. Now I have come here to take you to Ayodhya and fulfil father's wish. You will be thinking of Ayodhya. None other than you, is worthy of ruling the kingdom. People are looking forward for your arrival." When Rama heard the death of his father, he fell into grief.

The two princes and Sita went to the river mandakini and offered libations (Tarpana) to the departed soul of their father. They returned to cottage. The sage Vasishta brought all the three queens to the cottage. The queens were overwhelmed with joy to see them united with their children. They embraced them, blessed them. Rama, Lakshmana grieved to see their mothers as widows. Of the three queens Kaikeyi was feeling very bad. She was repenting for the sin she had committed. She cried and confessed to Rama, "I am cruel, I am the murderer of your father. Had I not asked for the boons, all this could not have happened. I am the sinner. I have committed Such a sin that can never be forgiven. Rama my son, if you have no ill feeling towards this

mother, you return to Ayodhya and take over the kingdom, fulfil the expectations of people."

Rama realised, how his step mother Kaikeyi is feeling. He had no bad feelings towards her. His reverence and love towards her did not reduce inspite of her order for exilement. He wanted to console her. So he said, "Mother do not grieve. I don't blame you for what has happened. I still regard you as my dear mother. All things happen as for the wish of fate. You donot repent; don't feel guilty. But mother, you should excuse me for refusing your request for returning to Ayodhya, because if I come, I will be breaking the vows of my father and I will be committing a sin of disloyalty to my father." So saying Rama politely denied her request to accompany thus. He advised Bharatha to return and take over the charge of the throne and rule the kingdom lawfully and keep people happy.

He explained Bharatha the tradition of the dynasty. Nobody fails in his promise or a vow, what ever difficulties, one may have to face. Yet no one dares to break the tradition. Your

mother is not to be blamed. If father had promised to give the boons it was but natural to fulfil, so we must do our duty and see that the father's promise is kept. You need not worry about me. We can happily spend fourteen years in no time. We will come back. Shathurgna is there to help you in your administration."



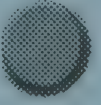
Bharatha was helpless. Any amount of requests, would not deter Rama. So Bharatha finally agreed to listen to Rama on one condition that after completion of fourteen years, he should take up the kingdom and rule. Until then he will only be a representative of Rama. He will rule in the name of Rama and Rama

should give his wooden sandals which will serve as symbol of him. Rama at last yielded to this request and handed him over his wooden sandals.

Bharatha with due respect kept this pair of sandals on his head and took leave from Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Once again he reminded Rama his promise.

Bharatha and his people turned back towards Ayodhya.

After returning to Ayodhya, Bharatha though ruling the kingdom with the help of ministers, he had given up the royal life. He lived a life of an ascet in Nandigram in a hermitage like dwelling. He waited eagerly for the return of his brothers and sister in law.



The troubles begin

After Bharatha had left, Rama was feeling unhappy. The whole place seemed to him desolate. The sad and drooping faces of mothers and brothers were always reeling before him. Every minute he was reminded of them. So he wanted to shift his cottage somewhere else.

Finally with the consent of Lakshmana and Sita, they left the place and moved into deep forest. While walking through the forest they noticed the signs of sacrifice and bark garments spread out to dry. Looking at these things they realised that the holy men were living in that place.

The place was beautiful and calm. When they moved little further, they saw the radiant faces of Rishis. Rama offered his respects and walked a little, just then he heard a terrible sound and a gigantic figure rushing towards them. In a fraction of a second, the man eating Rakshasa pounced on Sita and carried her away. Rama, Lakshmana did not know what to do. They felt helpless. They shot arrows,

but no use. Rakshasa had earned a boon from Brahma that no weapon can kill him. This, he himself told the brothers. They pleaded and threatened him. But of no use. The Rakshasa was Viradha. He dropped Sita down and lifted Rama, Lakshmana and placed them on his shoulders and ran. Sita was trembling when they disappeared. She was crying aloud. Rama, Lakshmana knew the secret to kill him. They wrenched off his shoulders, attacked him with hands and feet. Finally they killed him.

They continued their journey and visited the Ashram of Atri and Anusuya, offered their respects. Received good hospitality and blessings. Further also, they visited Many Rishi Munis. With his humility he earned their blessings and even the fruits of their penance. In turn Rama promised to protect them from Rakshasas and free them from trouble.

Their next visit was to the Ashram of Agastya. By then they had finished ten years of their stay in the forest. Agastya was a sage, famous like Vishwamithra. He was known through the three worlds. He had done great many

miracles. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita reached the Ashram, touched the feet of Agastya. Agastya was over whelmed to see them. He said, "Rama, I heard all about you. I was expecting you from long time. What you have done to the Rishis', I have known. May god bless you. Take this bow, made for Vishnu and inexhaustible quiver. These are very powerful. Now you go to Panchavati and live there. My blessings are with you. You are lucky, you have a brother like Lakshmana and a wife who is like Arundhati. I wish you will fulfil your father's vow at the earliest." So saying Agastya bid them farewell.

Rama heeding to the advice of Agastya walked towards Panchavati. While walking through the thick forest, they had to face many obstacles. Encounter wild animals, Rakshasas. But some how they managed all troubles and odds.

They reached Panchavati. This was a very beautiful place. Sita was excited. Everything was nice. But had they walked few miles, they met a figure. On enquiring, he introduced

himself as Sampathi, Dasaratha's friend. He said, " I know everything. If you need any help I am there. May god Bless you" Rama was pleased and he thanked him and proceeded.

On reaching panchavati, all the three felt joyous to see the scenic beauty of the place. By Rama's orders, Lakshmana built a beautiful Kuteera.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita lived happily for some time. All the three did their respective duties. They never had a moment of unhappiness. They were only looking forward to the end of Vanavasa.

One day when they were sitting leisurely and discussing about the values of life, they saw a woman form. She looked very beautiful. She saw Rama, instantly she fell in love. She wanted to marry him. She approached him and said, "O handsome man, I have fallen in love with you. I wish to marry you. Why dont you accept me as your wife? See my beauty." Rama did not know what to say. He wondered, who might be this beautiful lady. He became

suspicious. He thought it may be the trick of Rakshasas. However he told her, "Look lady, I am already married. See my wife standing there. So you please go to my brother Lakshmana. He is alone."

The beautiful lady, was none but Ravana's sister Shoorpanakha. Rama guessed she might be from Rakshasa clan. He thought Lakshmana would teach her the right lesson, in case she is Rakshasi, so he sent her to him.

Shoorpanakha happily approached Lakshmana and proposed to him to marry her. Lakshmana told her in humour, "Oh Lady! My brother is joking. You seem to be from a rich family. I am only a slave to Lord Rama. How can you marry a slave?"

Shoorpanakha fell into dilemma. She went to Rama again. She looked at Sita and cried aloud and said, "Oh! Is it this wretched insect that stands between you and me? I shall kill her and make way for us" and pounced on Sita. She was in terrible fear. Rama intervened and freed Sita from her clutches. Again advised her politely to go to Lakshmana. When she

went to him Rama shouted and said to teach her a lesson. Lakshmana caught hold of her and severed her nose. Immediately the shoorpanakha transformed herself into ugly monsteress. Bleeding and mad with pain shouted, "Oh Rama, Lakshmana, you shall pay for this." And ran to her brothers Khara and Dooshana. She narrated the whole story and spoke in agony and anger, "Brothers look at me what have you been doing when your dear sister is insulted and wounded. You call yourselves the kings of this forest domain but you never show your manhood. How can I withstand the humility done by after all two human weaklings. If you really love your sister immediately take revenge."

Brothers were moved. They immediately marched towards the cottage where Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were there. Rama had suspected that something is going to befall. So he sent Lakshmana and Sita to a safer place, and got ready for encounter. As expected Khara, Dooshana and a big army landed in front of Rama.

There was a big battle between Rama and the Rakshasas. Rama with all his might fought them. Rakshasas however they tried, they could not withstand Rama's arrows. Both the Rakshasas and the army though totally defeated. One of the Rakshasas by name Akampana, somehow survived.

Akampana went to Ravana and narrated the whole story. He described to Ravana that how Rama, single handed destroyed huge army of Rakshasas and Khara, Dooshana and Trisira also.

Ravana said, "If so I will go immediately and destroy those two creatures."

Akampana said, "Listen to me king. No one in this world can destroy him and there is no way to kill him. But there is only one way by which you can kill him without much effort. Rama has a beautiful wife. In the whole of Universe, there is none to be compared with her. Rama loves her too much. So if you carry her off and make your queen, Rama with pain of separation will die all by himself."

This plan suited him. Thanking him, he went

to his place. Next day morning he set out on his job. But before that he went straight to his maternal uncle Mareecha and told him all about his plan.

Mareecha carefully listened to Ravana and said calmly, "What kind of a plan is this? Who has given you this idea? If you try to do as per the plan, you are sure to invite your doom. So please go back and enjoy your life."

Ravana too felt that what Mareecha said was right and returned to Lanka and happily lived.

One day while he was seated surrounded by his ministers and counsellors, Shoorpanakha charged in. She was bleeding, twitching with pain and sorrow. As soon as she entered she started taunting her brother, "What a fool you are. When your doom and destruction is lingering at your door you are enjoying your royal life. All your brothers and army of fourteen thousand Rakshasas have been killed. Your dear sister being disgraced, distorted put to shame. Doesn't all this matter to you? You call yourself a hero."

Ravana was stung by her sharp arrow like

words. He consoled her telling that he would definitely avenge for what they have done to her. Shoorpanakha to provoke her brother further, continued to say about the brothers' valour and Sita's beauty. "I have no words to describe her divine beauty. She is worth to be a wife of you than Rama. As soon as I saw her I felt that she deserved you more and so I thought of carrying her off for you. But Lakshmana who was standing by her not only prevented me but he did all this of me." So saying she showed her mutilated nose.

Ravana now got kindled of love for Sita, forgetting the advice of Mareecha, proceeded for action. Again he visited Mareecha and asked for his help.

Mareecha though was surprised for the second visit of Ravana, he welcomed him as usual. Mareecha asked Ravana what he can do for him. Ravana said, "Though I had given up the idea of carrying off sita, after seeing the condition of my sister and recalling the huge loss done to my kith and kin, I have decided to go with my earlier plan."

Mareecha again tried to dissuade Ravana

from his attempt to whisk away sita. But Ravana was now not in a position to listen to him. He told him in the authority of a king, "You have many magical powers, with that, you turn yourself into a golden deer with silver spots and roam in the surroundings of the cottage where in Sita lives. Sita, I am sure will fall for its beauty and plead her husband to get her the deer. I am sure Rama, Lakshmana in order to fulfil her wish would go chasing after the goldendeer. Sita will be left behind unguarded, at that moment I will go there in disguise and carry her off to my place."

Mareecha realised that Ravana will not listen any further advice. Moreover the fate is responsible for his adamant attitude. Let him suffer what is written on his forehead.' He thought and obeyed his orders.

He transformed himself into golden deer and wandered here and there in the surroundings of cottage. Sita noticed this strange and wonderful deer with golden body and silver spots. At once she was attracted towards it. She told Rama pointing towards the deer. Rama

keenly noticed. Meanwhile Lakshmana also noticed it. For him it looked deceptive. It was no ordinary deer. It may be Rakshasa in disguise he thought and told Rama what he thought. But Sita wanted that deer for her. She pleaded to get the deer.



She expressed her desire to take it to Ayodhya and show everybody its celestial beauty. Rama was in dilemma. She had not asked for anything so far. He never wanted to disappoint her. So he told Lakshmana to guard her and he would go and catch the deer for her. But Lakshmana had his own fears. He was worried about his brother. Again he tried

to prevent him. But Rama told Lakshmana not to have any fear. He can manage any trouble and proceeded to catch the deer.

The deer played tricks. It appeared to be at the reach of Rama and when he was about to catch, it immediately disappeared. Rama was too tired. He was far away from the cottage. Finally he decided to shoot at it. When Rama's arrow hit the deer, Mareecha cast off his disguise and cried aloud imitating Rama's voice, "Ah Lakshmana! Ah Sita!"

Lakshmana and Sita heard this. Sita was terribly frightened. She thought Rama might be in danger. She turned to Lakshmana and asked him to go to his help. But Lakshmana knew that it was the trick of Rakshasas to mislead and deceive them. So he told Sita not to worry. "Rama can manage. No one can do any harm to him." He said this. But Sita instead of believing in the words of Lakshmana and having faith in Rama's valour, became angry and accused Lakshmana saying that he doesnot want to save his brother and he has bad intention towards her.

Lakshmana was hurt with her cruel words. He never wanted to hear any more of such words. So unwillingly he got ready to go. But before going he drew three lines around the hut and asked Sita not to cross those lines in any circumstance, if any one tries to cross over the lines, will be burnt into ashes.'

He took his bow and arrow and again reminded her of the instructions and left to save his brother.

The moment Lakshmana left the place, Ravana who was hiding and watching, immediately took the form of a sage and went to the hut. Stood in front and called out to Sita and asked for some food. Sita came out of the hut and noticed the sage standing and asking for food. She believed him to be real sage and so went in and brought some fruits for the sage and offered him to take it. She did not cross the lines. Remaining within the boundary of lines she prayed him to accept fruits. But Ravana who was now in the form of a sage, asked her to come out and give the fruits. But Sita politely refused, since his brother-in-law has ordered her not to cross the lines, if she

did she would be disobeying the orders. The sage was reluctant. He said she has no respect for the sages and he said that he too was insulted by her behaviour and turned off to go. Sita did not know what to do. She did not like to send the sage away without giving anything. She thought for a while, took courage and crossed over the boundry. Immediately sage turned into ten headed Ravana with all pomp and stood before her. She trembled at the sight and tried to run into the hut. But Ravana pulled her towards him and introduced himself as the king of Lanka and expressed his desire to marry her so that she shall live like his dearest queen.

In this unexpected situation, she some how picked up courage and defied this powerful monster whom she knew as Ravana for proposing such things to her. She even threatened Ravana, that if her husband Rama and brother in-law Lakshmana come to know what he has been to her, would punish him seriously. Ravana simply laughed and proceeded towards her, lifted her and put her

into his chariot and flew off. Sita was crying aloud, "O my lord! Where are you, the wicked Ravana is carrying me off to Lanka. O Lakshmana! I was wrong when you advised me. Why don't you people come and protect me? Or is there no one to protect me from Ravana? Her cry was pathetic. The whole forest echoed her cry.



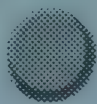
Meanwhile Jatayu, half asleep had the glimpse of the chariot and heard a woman's cry. He woke up and came flying and saw the chariot flying fast. He chased it and encountered Ravana. But alas! He fell almost dead. Even while dying he abused Ravana for

the shameful act of carrying off other man's wife. Ravana did not heed his words and carried her away leaving Jatayu only to lament. Jatayu was holding his breath by his will power to pass on the information about Sita.

Meanwhile in the forest, Rama when killed the deer, Mareecha expressed himself. Then Rama realised that he was deceived. He was hurrying back in agony, thinking what might have happened in the hut. While returning he saw Lakshmana coming from opposite side. He looked worried and in anxiety. When both the brothers met they were surprised. Rama eagerly enquired about Sita and asked why did he come leaving sita alone behind. Lakshmana was in tears. He said, "O my revered brother, I never wanted to leave her alone. But when she heard your voice asking for help, She forced me to come to your rescue. I tried to convince that nothing will happen to you. But she did not listen to my words. On the contrary she accused me with evil intentions. At that moment I was helpless and had no option than coming to you brother. Please excuse me and try to understand my condition.

Rama trusted Lakshmana. He had great love and faith in him. They both now were worried about Sita. They hurried back to the hut and called out to Sita. There was no reply. They searched all around, no where she was seen. They became panicky. When they went out into the forest to look for her, close at a distance they saw Jatayu in a pool of blood. He was wounded very badly. Rama asked him who has done all this to him. Jatayu with a feeble voice told Rama, "Son, Ravana has done all this to me because I tried to prevent him from taking your wife Sita. though I tried all my best to rescue her from him, because of my oldage, I was defeated badly, he has carried her to Lanka. Go children, go towards south direction and free daughter Sita from his clutches. So saying Jatayu, breathed his last.

Now Rama and Lakshmana could do nothing but go in the direction guided by Jatayu. They performed the last rites of Jatayu since he was their second father and proceeded with sorrow and sunken hearts, but with a remote hope of meeting Sita.



In Search of Sita

With heavy hearts, the brothers headed towards south direction. Hardly had they gone few miles. They were caught by the sight of a huge ugly form without head or feet. He was a monster called Kabandha. Without moving from his place, he would stretch his arms and catch the prey.

He saw Rama and Lakshmana and caught them both. For a moment they were bewildered, but later they managed to cut both his arms. He fell dead. When his body was put in flames, a handsome Gandharva appeared from amidst. He introduced himself and thanked them for freeing from the curse.

Now they travelled in the direction of the Pampa. It was a lovely place. There was an Ashram wherein aged Sanyasini by name Sabari lived. She was the disciple of Matanga Rishi. They visited this Ashram and enjoyed her hospitality. She was like their mother. They were very happy to have had motherly affection from her. She narrated her story, and told them that she was long waiting for their arrival.

The meeting with Sabari, her hospitality and the lovely surroundings gave them some peace. But they felt sad to see their mother like Sabari entering flames in order to reach heaven.

They went all over the Pampa area. Each minute they remembered Sita and pined for her. Particularly Rama was disheartened. He was suffering within from Sita's separation. Lakshmana however, tried to keep his spirits alive.

When they were roaming aimlessly, in the surroundings of Rishyamooka, the Vanara prince Sugreeva was sitting and discussing matters with his faithful men. When he noticed these two human beings from a distance, he became suspicious. He thought that his brother Vali might have sent his men to kill him.

Hanuman, the chief minister of Sugreeva, told him not to have any fears and he himself will find out what the matter is? Who they are? and all that. Taking the form of a Brahman, Hanuman approached Rama and Lakshmana and spoke to them, "Who are you? Why are

you roaming here? What made you come here? Who has sent you?"

Rama spoke, "Revered Brahmin, we are the sons of king Dasaratha of Ayodhya. My name is Rama and he is my younger brother Lakshmana. My wife has been kidnapped by Ravana, the king of demons and we are searching for Sugreeva, who I am told is the only person who can help us in locating Sita. The saintess Shabari told us. Sir if you can help us, please show us the way to meet Sugreeva."

Hanuman by then was much impressed with Rama and Lakshmana when he heard the whole story of Rama. He was pleased with his obedience, truthfulness. He revealed to them his realself, consoled them. He even said that his king sugreeva is also in the same plight. He is also deprived of his wife from his own brother Vali, and hence he knows what the pain of separation from a wife. So you can mutually help each other and restore your wives. Only thing you have to do is to kill Vali and restore him the lost kingdom and his wife. He in turn

will help you in finding out Sita. He has a huge army of Vanaras. You can come along with me to Rishyamooka mountain where presently my king is having a hide out and showed them the direction of the mountain. But for Rama, Lakshmana it was a big and difficult task to climb the mountain. Hanuman understood their mind by their faces. So he returned to his original form carried them on his shoulders and reached the spot. Sugreeva, now seeing Hanuman friendly with them, he shed his fears off.

Hanuman introduced both of them to Sugreeva. He told him the whole story of the princes Rama and Lakshmana, without forgetting the kidnap of Sita by Ravana, and said that they need his help. He also said that they are worthy of friendship.

Sugreeva extended his hand for friendship. Rama was also too happy to accept that friendship. They both were extended good hospitality.

Sugreeva also narrated his sad tale. He told him how he was deceived of his kingdom and his wife by force was taken from him.

Rama consoled him and said, "friend, have no fears. I shall help you with all my might. There will be an end for your sufferings. If your brother has done wrong to you, he will definitely pay for his deeds. I will see that you get back your kingdom and your wife". So both Rama and Sugreeva vowed to help each other. Both of them were happy now.

Sugreeva, who had found some ornaments. Showed to Rama. Immediately Rama recognised them as Sita's. Looking at the ornaments thought of Sita occurred to him and felt depressed. He wanted to confirm if they were really Sita's. So he asked Lakshmana to identify. But Lakshmana said, "Brother, I am sorry I have not seen any other ornaments than anklets because I always bowed and touched her feet to get her blessings. Rama was full of grief. Tears rushed in torrents. Sugreeva and Lakshmana consoled him with soothing words.

As was agreed, Rama was to help Sugreeva in regaining his kingdom Kishkindha and family.

Rama fixed a day. He asked Sugreeva to go to Vali and challenge him for fight.

Sugreeva did as he was told. He went and roared at the gate of Vali and invited him to fight. Vali wondered about his brother's courage. But he was enraged with Sugreeva Challenging him. He felt insulted and came out and sprang on Sugreeva. They were fighting bravely. Rama was supposed to kill Vali, but as Vali and Sugreeva were so alike that Rama was in utter confusion to identify Vali from Sugreeva. So he feared to shoot lest he may kill Sugreeva.

Both were though fighting fiercely, Sugreeva was severely wounded and he was bleeding terribly. He fled to Rishyamooka to save himself. He was angry with Rama for failing in his promise. But Rama knowing, what might be going in the mind of Sugreeva, apologized to him and said, "Dear friend, both of you are so alike, that I was in confusion to shoot whom. Today when you go to fight, you wear a garland so that I can avoid you and aim at the enemy rightly.



Sugreeva, next day did as he was told. He went to Vali's place. Roared, taunted, invited him for duel fight. Vali was astonished. He was wondering and thinking, even after so badly hurt, what makes him so bold to fight again. But however he got ready to go. His wife some what felt something fishy and so she requested Vali not to give fight to Sugreeva. Vali did not care to listen to her. He hurried out and started fighting. Hardly he had fought for few moments he fell dead with Rama's arrow which rushed and pierced his chest. Vali with twitching pain was about to die but before dying he spoke to Rama, "Rama I have no regrets for dying

because today or tomorrow everyone has to die. But you have sinned yourself by killing me for no valid reason. Even then I did not blame you for what you have done. Only my request to you is that my son Angada has become orphan. You and Sugreeva should take care of him. I entrust my son to you." So saying he closed his eyes.

Rama fulfilled his promise to Sugreeva. He was crowned as the king of Kishkindha. Everything was well. Vanaras were happy. But Sugreeva once he got all he wanted, he totally forgot his promise to Rama in helping to locate Sita. Lakshmana was becoming furious. He wanted to teach Sugreeva a lesson. But Rama prevented him. He instead asked Lakshmana to go to Sugreeva and remind him of his promise and arouse him to his duties.

When Lakshmana came to Sugreeva and reminded him of his promise. Sugreeva realised his mistake and felt ashamed. He summoned all his ministers and chief minister Hanuman to discuss the matter and to decide how to go about. After discussion he ordered his army to

go in search of Sita. He distributed the work and divided his army into four groups to go in four directions.

Rama had more faith in Hanuman. He was sure that Hanuman would definitely bring the news of Sita. So he particularly requested Hanuman to do the needful and gave him his ring to be given to Sita to make her believe that Hanuman was sent by Rama.

As per the orders, the army set out in all four directions. Hanuman, Angada, Neela, Jambavan and many others also accompanied the army.

They searched in all directions, but could not find Sita anywhere. A group which was headed by Angada and Hanuman had moved to Southwards. They also carefully searched in the caves and forests of the Vindhya. From there they still moved to further Southwards in their search. They were passing through a desert. They were fainting with thirst and hunger, they saw a cave from which the joyous birds flew out, a cool wind blew from within. Vanaras were happy to think that there was

water. They all entered the cave. They saw trees laden with juicy fruits and streams of sweet water. They saw even the city, golden palace, streets paved with gems. They felt as if they are dreaming. They walked along and noticed a woman who was looking like a Sanyasini. Hanuman approached and saluted her and enquired who she was? And whether she would permit them to eat fruits and drink water.

The Sanyasini was Swayamprahba. She was guarding the city. She would not allow any one to touch the plants and trees. When Hanuman asked, first she refused to allow them to eat and drink. But later when she heard from Hanuman that they have come on behalf of Rama, she allowed them to eat, drink and refresh themselves.

After refreshing, Hanuman and others were transported by Swayamprabha since any one who enters the cave cannot go back on their own.

They were all at the sea shore. To their surprise, the other groups also were there.

They were worried because the time set was coming close. If they go without discovering Sita, king Sugreeva would punish them. Instead it is better to die fasting. Meanwhile Sampathi the vulture king saw the Vanaras and was very happy because he could have feast of them. Since many days he was famished, as he was not able to move in search of food.

Right at that moment Hanuman and others were talking and lamenting about what all had happened till that moment. In between the talk, some how the name of Jatayu appeared. As soon as Sampathi overheard this name, became curious and on knowing he was killed, he burst into tears. Jatayu was Sampathi's brother. He told Hanuman about Sita and where she was. He described how she was captive in Lanka and guarded by Rakshasas.

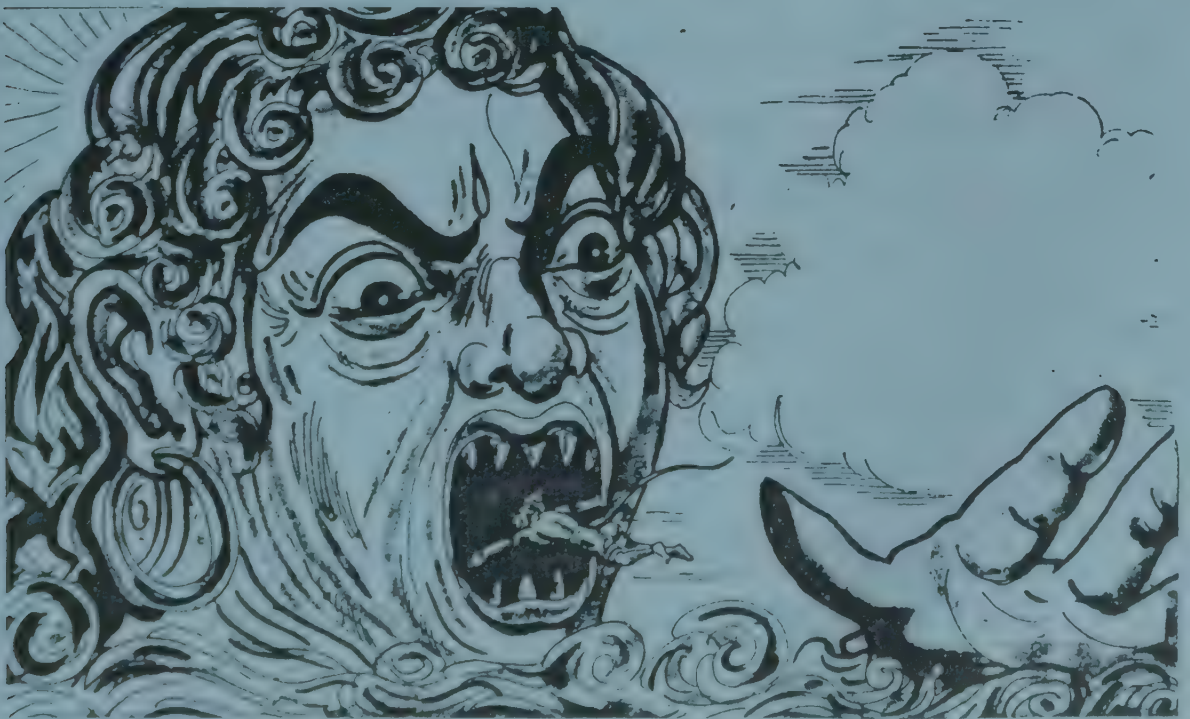
Getting the clues from Sampathi, they were confident about the success of their mission. But only problem was how to reach Lanka. They had to cross the sea. They did not lose courage. Angada asked each one of his followers to state the maximum length that he

could jump. But what the account each one gave was not sufficient.

Jambavan looked at Hanuman who was silently sitting and listening to everyone. Jambavan believed in the high merit of Hanuman. To him, he was the only one who could jump any length and cross over the sea and reach Lanka. He praised Hanuman. He reminded him of his childhood incident. "When you were a child you happened to see the sun and thinking that it was a fruit, you flew towards to pluck it. Indra seeing this got frightened and to protect the sun from you, he attacked you with Vajrayudha, with this your jaw was broken. Your father on seeing this got angry and stopped movement. The whole world felt suffocated without the air blowing. Brahma and Indra came to your father and requested him to give up anger. They showered blessings on you. Indra gave boons to you. No weapon can slay you. On your will, you can invite death when ever you want, you are immortal. You have the strength of Vayu. You are intelligent and brave. Please arise and realize your capabilities. You will reach your goal."

When he heard his praise, he recalled everything. He had forgotten his strength because of the curse by a sage. Now he thought he can become as mighty as possible. He grew in stature unimaginably. The Monkeys or Vanaras were over whelmed to see his huge form. He picked up all strength; got ready to take off. Stood on top of the Mahendra hill and within a flash of a second, he leaped towards Lanka.

On his way he had to face many trials. A mountain rose and stood in his way, but Hanuman with ease struck it. Further he met Surasa, a monsteress who forced Hanuman



to enter her mouth. Hanuman enlarged his body. Correspondingly Surasa also widened her mouth. Suddenly Hanuman reduced his form to microscopic size, entered into the mouth and easily came out.

Surasa was pleased with Hanuman's wisdom and his magical powers. She wished him good luck and disappeared in the sea.

Likewise many more obstacles appeared on his way. But he passed off all the odds, and reached Lanka.

He was astonished to see magnificent city, golden palaces, elegant buildings. It was something like Amaravathi the city of Gods. He thought, first he should find out where Sita is. He decided to enter and search for her in darkness to avoid any one suspecting him. But inspite of it he was noticed by Lankini. He had to defeat her, until then he cannot enter Lanka. So he encountered and defeated. Lankini thought that the Lanka and Ravana's dooms day has approached, because she remembered the prophecy that when ever a monkey enters the kingdom, doom befalls. She

told to herself 'Ravana's sins are many and grievous. The end of Lanka is fast approaching.'



Now Hanuman made his entry into the city. He looked for Sita everywhere. He searched all the mansions and came even to the palace of Ravana. He was thrilled to see the grandeur of the palace and the mansions around that. He entered the private apartment of Ravana. But alas! Nowhere Sita could be seen. He observed many beautiful women. But to his mind, no one seemed Sita to him. He was very much disappointed. He cursed himself for being unsuccessful.

But he did not give up his efforts to search

for her. He was thinking seriously sitting on a tree branch. Suddenly it occurred to him that he had not searched the gardens around and proceeded. He stood on a high wall and looked around. He noticed a beautiful garden.



He was excited. He saw a thin and fragile woman figure sitting under a tree on a platform. She looked in despair. He thought that she must be Sita. Peering between the leaves and not knowing how to meet her he was in puzzle. Even if he meets, she may not believe it. But however, he jumped and stood before her with folded hands. Sang in praise of Rama. When Sita heard Rama being praised, She

was astonished though she was in fear. Hanuman saw her dilemma and started speaking to her in joyous tone, "Mother I see you in tears. Tell me who you are? What made you come here? By your looks, you seem to be a princess in distress. Please tell me who you are? Are you the one unfortunate princess whom the wicked Ravana had kidnapped and caused great pain and separated you from Rama?"

Then Sita said, "Yes child I am the Sita indeed, the daughter of Janaka and wife of Sri Rama. He was deprived of his kingdom. To keep up the promise of his father, he had to come into exile. While we were happily living in the forest, we had to face many problems, and encounter Shoorpanakha, Mareecha and finally Ravana, in the absence of my husband and Lakshmana, by force carried me off to Lanka." Saying these words she broke down into sobs.

Hanuman conveyed the message that Rama the noble soul and Lakshmana are safe. They have sent their salutations to her.

Sita was very happy to hear the news. She felt relieved but immediately she became suspicious, thinking that again it may be a trick played by Rakshasas and he may be in this guise.

Hanuman understood what was going in the mind of Sita. To make her believe he took out the ring of Rama and gave it to her. The moment she saw the ring, she became emotional and remembered all the moments spent with him. Now however, she believed Hanuman, blessed him. Again he convinced her that Lord Rama would come with an army at the earliest, he will kill Ravana and take her back with him.

Before leaving Lanka, he wanted to survey the strength of Ravana, if possible, meet him and tell him about Rama's strength, he started destroying plants and trees to draw their attention towards him. The Rakshasas who were guarding became panicky and rushed to Ravana to inform him about Hanuman, who could not be killed inspite of their brave encounter. Ravana became angry and he

immediately ordered his son Indrajeet to go and bring him.

Indrajeet rushed to place and after fighting for some time, he captured him with Brahmastra. Hanuman though could have freed himself, he did not do it, he submitted himself because he wanted himself to be taken to Ravana.

When he was taken to the court, Ravana without even offering a seat, started asking him, "Who are you? Why you have come here? Why are you destroying like this the Ashoka Vatika?"

Hanuman, allowing his tail to grow he wound in vertical circles and sat higher than Ravana and said, "I am Hanuman, messenger of Lord Rama whose wife Sita, you have kidnapped. I am also the chief minister of Sugreeva the king of Monkeys. You have done a blunder setting your eyes on another man's wife. You may have to pay for it. I sincerely advise you to return Sita with respect to Rama. Otherwise he will come with a big army and destroy you and Lanka and take his wife."

Ravana was furious to hear a monkey advising him. He ordered his soldiers to kill him. But Vibheeshana, the brother of Ravana, advised him not to do so because a messenger should never be killed. Ravana thought for a while, for monkeys, the most important thing is tail. So the tail should be made useless by burning it. He thought and ordered his people to wound cloth round his tail, dip it in oil and set fire to it.

Immediately orders were carried out. The tail was in flames. But Hanuman did not feel the effect. Instead he started setting fire to all things. Lanka was burning in terrible flames. He was rejoicing the sight. But for a moment he became worried about Sita. He regretted for what he has done. He wanted to know if Sita was safe. He went there, both of them were happy to see each other safe. By then he had dipped his tail in the sea and had put off the fire. He took Sita's permission and requested her to give some thing as a proof to show him that he had met her.

Again he consoled and convinced Sita that

Ravana's end is approaching and she would unite with Rama at the earliest.

Hanuman, returned to the seashore where his people were waiting for him. After hearing all the story from Hanuman they were all happy and felt that they have atlast achieved their goal. They all marched towards Kishkindha, rested in the Royal garden of Sugreeva and proceeded to the place of Rama. Rama was thrilled to see them all back. He had faith in the strength and intelligence of Hanuman. He eagerly enquired about Sita. Hanuman without leaving a single incident, narrated everything and conveyed to Rama, that Sita was safe and she is waiting anxiously to unite with him and he showed him the jewel (Choodamani) of Sita as a proof. Rama, the moment he saw that jewel, remembered and cried and worried about her anguish of loneliness amidst Rakshasas. He decided to bring her back as early as possible. But thinking of the problems surrounding the journey to Lanka disheartened him. How to cross the sea which was thousands of miles in length, was the major problem. But still something must be done. A way is to be thought to bring Sita back.



Journey to Lanka and the battle

Rama was very much pleased hearing about his meeting with Sita. Sugreeva also received all Vanaras with excitement. He heard Hanuman narrating all things happened at Lanka. They all praised Hanuman's greatness. But like Rama, Sugreeva also was worried about crossing the sea and reaching Lanka. Later, after few moments, he thought of the strength of his people. So he said to Rama, "My lord, no need to have any doubts. I have faith in my warriors. If they mind, they can do wonders. If need comes, they will lay down their lives for your sake. When Hanuman has seen the Lanka, it is certain that Lanka will fall. My warriors shall transport you to Lanka."

Rama and Sugreeva got into action. Rama and Lakshmana were carried on shoulders by monkeys. The army of monkeys along with Rama and Lakshmana marched on and reached the Seashore. They were very happy and showed enthusiasm in the task. Rama watching that enthusiasm and excitement was worried that in their excitement they may cause

damage and injury to men and material. So strict orders were given to every one not to harm any one on their way.

When they reached the shore. They were thinking of a plan to cross the sea.

Here in Lanka, meeting of ministers and other important people, was held. They remembered Hanuman, his guts, his audacity and destruction caused to life and Lanka. He must be punished, was the opinion of all. But Vibheeshana the brother of Ravana who was wise and a gentleman of virtue. Picked up courage and told his bother, "You have done a great mistake in kidnapping Sita, another man's wife, that too wife of Rama like person. Just because of your mistake, the whole of Lanka will be the victim of Rama's wrath. You have not guessed properly the strength of Rama. Even now, it is not too late. Go to Rama and ask for excuse, return Sita with respect. Don't invite troubles unnecessary."

Ravana hearing the words of Vibheeshana became still more angry. He was reluctant to do as he was advised by Vibheeshana.

Vibheeshana seeing that Ravana was firm with his own ways. He simply walked off from the place, crossed the sea and came into the protection of Rama. He told everything about Ravana. Lakshmana seemed not to believe him. But Rama did believe the words of Vibheeshana and took him to his protection.

Vibheeshana though wished for the safety of his brother, he was helpless. Second time also he tried to convince him to return Sita and save his life. But Ravana was so firm in his decision, not to yield to Rama that he did not care his brother's words.

Vibheeshana remained on the side of Rama. Now they were to plan for crossing the Sea. Rama thought of seeking the help of Sea God. So he started praying for him. For three days continuously he sat praying him. But as there was no response to his prayers, he became angry and thought that he should be punished. He decided to shoot the arrow and dry the Sea.

The moment Rama got ready to shoot, the Sea God appeared and apologized and said,

"My lord do not be angry. Have mercy on me and listen to my words. I cannot go against nature. But however I shall make easy passage for you. I shall bear the entire weight of your army. There are two monkeys by name Neela and Nala. Let them touch the materials to build the bridge, they will float. So without any problem and fear of drowning a bridge can be built. May you succeed." Saying these words the Sea God disappeared.



Immediately the monkeys started bringing trees and stones and other materials required to build the bridge. Neela and Nala touched each thing as to make it light. The bridge was ready within a short period of five to six days.

The monkeys were so happy to see the bridge built. The whole army marched on the bridge and reached Lanka.

Sugreeva and Hanuman assessed the strength of the enemy and gave an account of that to Rama. Rama distributed his army between Angada, Neela, Nala and others.

One day without telling any one, Sugreeva sprang up into the sky and alighted on the terrace on top of the tower in Lanka, where he saw Ravana seated dressed in kingly robes.

He stood before him and said, "Ravana, your end has come."

Ravana got irritated with these words and sprang on him. Both of them fought bravely. But Ravana when he could not fight anymore, started using his magical powers. Sugreeva some how managed and returned to Rama.

Rama was happy to see Sugreeva safe. He sent Angada as messenger and tutored him what to say.

Angada obeyed Rama and on meeting Ravana he told him, "listen Ravana, our Lord Rama has asked me to convey this message.

If you choose to die and reach Swarga, you may agree for battle, if you wish to live, you may surrender and return Sita and earn pardon from Rama. My sincere advice to you is to surrender and live long and wash off your sins."

Ravana flared up, he tried to capture him and punish.

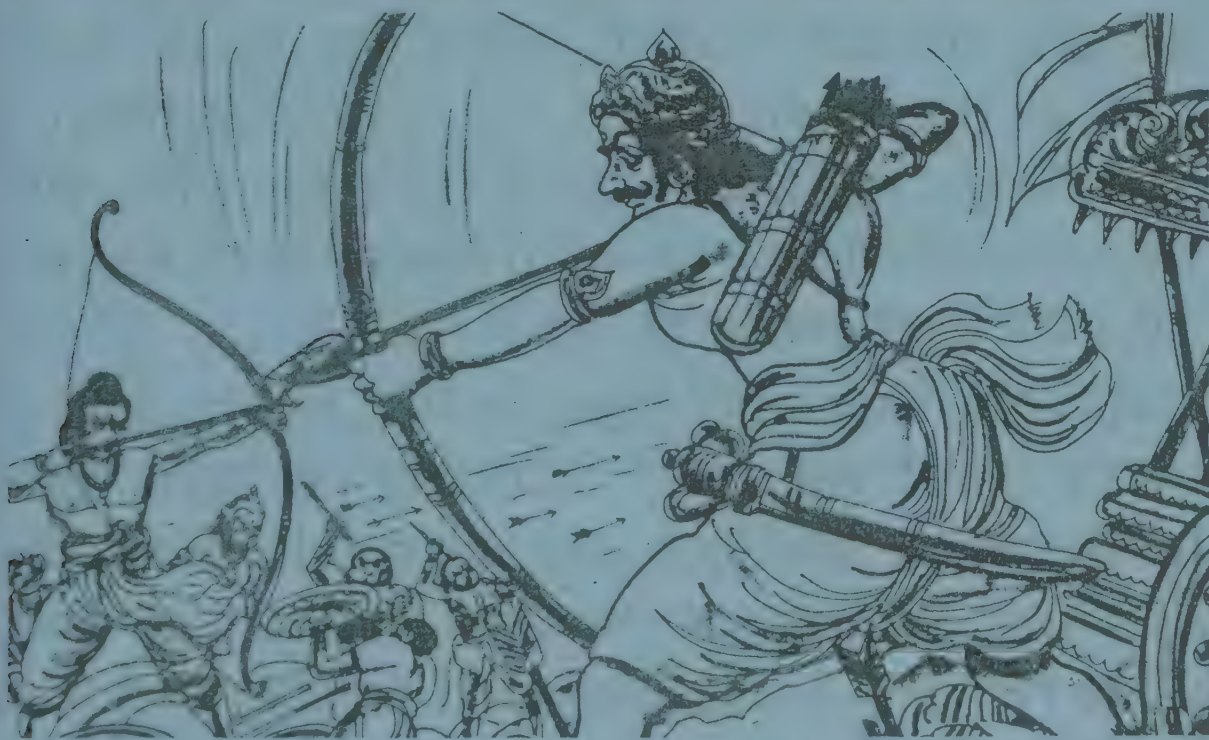
Angada returned to Rama and told him the reaction of Ravana. Rama had no other alternative than to order his army to attack Lanka. The monkey soldiers, as if waiting for the orders, rushed into the city of Lanka, ran here and there, plucked plants and trees; destroyed any thing that came across their way; threw heavy stones and uprooted trees on demons; created havoc. Demon soldiers were also fighting the battle in the same way as the monkeys. Both the sides, the armies fought bravely. Thousands of soldiers fell dead on both sides. The war went on for the whole day. Angada against Meghanada, Hanuman against Jambumali, were fighting. When Meghanada was almost defeated, then he

resorted to magic and became invisible. By his Nagastra he made Rama and Lakshmana fall unconscious. The news of defeat of Rama, Lakshmana spread like wild fire and reached Ravana also. Ravana felt happy and Sita was informed of the fate of Rama and Lakshmana. But however she was convinced that nothing has happened to them by Thrijata, a good companion of Sita.

Here with the help of Garuda, the power of Nagastra was broken. Rama and Lakshmana were cured of their wounds with Sanjeevini herbs brought by Hanuman. They both became stronger than earlier.

Monkeys were very happy to see Rama and Lakshmana recover. They danced with joy. Meanwhile Ravana who was celebrating the fall of his enemies, was shocked to hear them recovered. He became furious. He called his bravest of brave chief warriors Vajradanstra and Akampana and ordered them to fight and defeat Rama, Lakshmana and the Vanaras. Unfortunately, however brave they fought, were defeated and killed in the battle. When Ravana heard the death of these two, his spirits

fell. But again recovering from that state, he thought of prahastha, the commander in chief. He advised Ravana not to continue the battle, and to surrender to Rama. But Ravana was reluctant, Prahastha had no further saying in this regard and led his army into battle field. Though Prahastha and other Rakshasas fought with their all might, were killed by Neela.



Then Kumbhakarna who was the last resort of Ravana, was roused from his deep sleep from months and was told of their defeat. Hearing this at once he fumed with rage. He decided to go instantly and destroy the enemy. Ministers and others were happy to hear this.

As he had decided, he left to battle field with army. No one could stop Kumbhakarna. He went on killing spree.

The vanaras were terrified. They looked helpless. Now Rama, Lakshmana together encountered Kumbhakarna and killed him.

When all great warriors in a row lost their lives, and so much damage was done to Lanka, Ravana himself had to enter the battle field with all his might. Using his physical strength and magical powers, he fought for long. He was wounded all over by the arrows of Rama. He was over powered by Rama.

Ravana became thoughtful. He had lost many great warriors, including his sons and brothers. He had lost courage totally. But still, he could not accept his defeat. The ego and pride remained with him. So he continued the fight with Rama. Rama chided him for abducting Sita. He said, "O Ravana, being so brave and learned, you did a great sin carrying my wife with force. This is not befitting for your status. Had I been there at that moment, I would have killed you and saved her."

Ravana with indifference laughed and said, "O Rama, no one is born to kill me. What can you do to me? Instead of getting killed by me, you go back and forget Sita."



These words infuriated Rama. He picked up his strength. He shot all great and powerful arrows at Ravana. But they were futile. At last Rama used Brahmastra which went straight emitting flames and pierced Ravana's chest and shattered it. He fell dead. There was heavenly shower of flowers on Rama for his victory.

Crowning of Vibheeshana -Return to Ayodhya

Vibheeshana, though had left his brother Ravana, he could not control himself. He burst into tears at the death of his brother. Rama consoled Vibheeshana and said, "Vibheeshana, weep not. Your brother was a great hero. He fought bravely. He must have ascended heaven. Now he has purified his sins. Do not delay. Get up and perform the last rites of your brother. It is time to take up the responsibilities of the kingdom of Lanka."

Vibheeshana obeyed the instructions of Rama. Rama sent Lakshmana, Hanuman, Sugreeva, Angada and Jambavan to the royal court of Lanka and asked them to perform coronation ceremony of Vibheeshana.

Rama sent Hanuman to Sita with the permission of Vibheeshana, to inform Sita what all has happened. Hanuman, taking leave from Rama went to 'Ashoka Vana' and told Sita everything in detail. While returning he asked her what message is to be conveyed to him on

her behalf. But Sita only said, "I am eager to be in my husband's presence."

Hanuman returned and conveyed what Sita had told. But Rama seemed to show no joy or happiness, instead he looked dull and gloomy. He turned to Lakshmana and said, "Lakshmana you ask Vibheeshana to bring her here, bathed and bedecked."

Sita, though refused to do so first, later she did as she was told. Sita was brought in a Palanquin. Rama was surrounded by Vanaras, when she alighted the Palanquin. Rama looking at Sita said, "Sita I have killed the enemies and recovered you from them. Here ends my duty as a Kshathriya. My vow is fulfilled you are free to live as you wish. I cannot take you to live with me, since you have stayed longer in a stranger's house."

Sita was shocked at the piercing words of Rama. She broke into sobs. "My lord, what for this punishment? What crime have I done? Why did I wait for so long? If I were to know, that you were going to reject me, I would have died long back." Saying this she bitterly cried

and turning to Lakshmana she Said, "O my son, bring faggots and kindle fire. I want to prove my purity."



Lakshmana obeyed her orders. Fire was kindled. Sita bowing to all elders around and praying Gods, jumped into fire. But to everybody's surprise, Fire God accompanying Sita, appeared and addressed everybody and particularly Rama and convinced that Sita is none but Lakshmi. Her purity is not to be suspected.

Rama was overwhelmed and told Sita, "*My dear, I have no doubt about your character and conduct. This test of fire was not for me*

but for the satisfaction of people. They should not comment anything later about your character. Hence this was a must for their sake. So please understand and excuse me."

All Vanaras and Rakshasas who had gathered there were very happy. In the presence of all Rama accepted Sita. Dasaratha and Indra descended from above and Dasaratha placed the prince Rama on his lap, blessed him and turning to Sita he said, "My child forgive my son for the troubles he caused you."

Indra also was pleased with Rama, he said to him, "Lord! My thanks to you for relieving this world from the clutches of demons. I intend giving you a boon. You can ask me for what ever you want. Rama politely said, "*Sir, I have only done my duty and that requires no returns. But still if you wish, you restore life to all the Vanaras and Bears who lost their lives for my sake.*"

Indra granted the boon. All Vanaras regained their lives.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana ascended Puspaka Vimana along with their friends,

Vanaras and Vibheeshana and flew towards Ayodhya.

Bharatha who was eagerly waiting for their return received message of their arrival through Guha, sent the news to all his people.

The city of Ayodhya looked joyous. The people gathered in front of the palace.

Pushpaka Vimana landed in front of the palace. Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and others came out of Pushpaka. They all bowed to mothers, Sumanthra and others, touched their feet and got the blessings. Bharatha was excited to see his revered brother back. He was eager to crown Rama and hand over the responsibilities of kingdom to him.

The Kulaguru Vasishta had meeting with sages and learned Brahmins to fix the date and time for coronation of Rama.

On the fixed day, Rama was bathed in holy waters. Sita also was advised for the same. Both Rama, Sita observed the rituals before the coronation. When every thing was done, both Rama and Sita were made to sit on the throne. They both were crowned and applied

tilak on the forehead. The whole of Ayodhya felt relieved.



All people gathered to see the crowning celebration and wish and bless the royal couple. The vedic hymns were chanted. The sages in large numbers who had gathered, showered praises on the royal couple. They declared Rama was none other than the great Vishnu, born to redeem the world from sorrows and destroy the demons who were causing troubles to sages and people.

Rama as a king ruled Ayodhya strictly according to Rajadharma. He loved his subjects as his own children. Ayodhya turned to be a welfare city.

SSB'S OTHER PUBLICATIONS

01. Travel Guide to Karnataka
02. Travel Guide to Bangalore
03. Travel Guide to Karnataka - Handy
04. Travel Guide to Bangalore - Handy
05. Travel Guide to Mysore
06. Travel Guide to Goa
07. Travel Guide to South India
08. Railway Recruitment Board (RRB, Non Tech.)
09. General Knowledge
10. Ever Latest General Knowledge-
11. Latest General Knowledge
12. English-English Pocket Dictionary
13. English-Kannada Pocket Dictionary
14. English-Kannada Concise Dictionary
15. English-English-Kannada Concise Dictionary
16. Great Leaders of India
17. General Knowledge Quiz
18. School Essays
19. Story of Mahabharatha



The Author of this book Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj is a Professor Emeritus, Scholar, Writer, Artist and a very good speaker. As a professor of Kannada, has taught in MES College for more than 34 years. Her excellent teaching, commitment to the profession earned her 'Best Teacher' Award from Government of Karnataka, Collegiate education in 2002.

She has not stopped at being a teacher, she is very well known in the field of literature as a poet, play wright, critic, novelist, short story writer, translator and even as a column writer.

Her areas of activities are innumerable. She is associated with Television, Radio and the Stage, either as a Producer, Director, Writer, Artist or in many other capacities.

In addition to her high qualifications like M.A., Ph.D. in Kannada, M.A. (Eng), Law Degree, Diploma in French and Sahithya Rathna in Hindi, she has authored more than thirty five books and won many awards which include attimabbe Award, Kannada Sahithya Parishat Award, Gorur Award, MES College Silver Jubilee Award, Perla Award and many other such Awards. She also has been a jury in many award committees.

It is our good fortune that we came across such a scholar and an educationist and also a reknowned writer. When we requested her to write for children, the two Epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha, she willingly consented to write. Now in the series, Ramayana is before you. Hope you will receive this with delight.

We are thankful to her for writing our series inspite of her busy schedule.

N. Karthikeyan
Publisher



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